A guide to help you

Choose the Best Medi-Cal Health Plan

for you and your family

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How this guide can help you

When you sign up for Medi-Cal, you may have to choose a health plan. The more you know about your plan, the easier it is to get the best care for you and your family.

Please take a minute to read through this guide. You will learn about quality of care and important services in your plan. You may want to save this guide in case you have questions later.

If you are ready to sign up for a Medi-Cal health plan, you will need to fill out the Medi-Cal Choice Form in the Medi-Cal enrollment booklet. (This booklet is called *My Medi-Cal Choice for Healthy Care*.) This booklet is mailed in a packet with plan Provider Directories. These Provider Directories have other important information, like the names of the doctors and hospitals in each plan.

You will probably have some questions. The last page of this guide tells you how to get answers to your questions.

Help for people who speak little or no English

If you need help understanding English, your Medi-Cal health plan must make sure you have a qualified interpreter any time you need medical care. Your plan must provide an interpreter no matter what language you speak. This is true even when you need medical care at night. This service is free – you do not have to pay when your plan provides an interpreter.

You should ask for an interpreter any time you need to talk to a doctor or nurse about a medical problem or talk to someone at the plan.

There are different ways that plans might provide an interpreter for you:

- The plan can help you find a doctor's office where the doctor, a nurse or other person in the office speaks your language.
- The plan might have an interpreter meet you at the doctor's office.
- The plan might have a person interpret by talking to you and your doctor on the telephone.

Usually, it is best if you use the plan's interpreter. If you want to use an adult family member or friend to interpret instead, you must sign a paper saying that you did not want to use the plan's interpreter.

Your health plan has written information that tells you about the health plan's services and programs and tells how to get medical care. In your county, written information is available in these languages:

- English
- Spanish

If the plan does not send you materials in your language, you should ask for them. If you cannot read or understand the materials, you should ask for an interpreter who will explain what the materials say.

If you have trouble getting an interpreter when you need one, or if you have trouble getting written information translated, you have the right to file a grievance. Look at the last page of this guide to learn how to file a grievance.

Programs to help you stay healthy

Each Medi-Cal health plan has programs to help you and your family stay healthy and manage illness. These are called **health education programs**. You do not have to pay to join these programs when you are enrolled in a Medi-Cal health plan.

Medi-Cal health plans offer programs that help you learn how to:

- Stay healthy when you are pregnant
- Keep your children safe and healthy
- Maintain good nutrition and exercise
- Manage and control your weight
- Manage and control your asthma
- Manage and control your diabetes
- Keep your heart healthy
- Control high blood pressure and cholesterol
- Quit smoking
- Prevent sexually transmitted disease and HIV/AIDS
- Prevent unplanned pregnancy
- Use new parenting skills
- Prevent dependence on drugs and alcohol

Plans offer these programs in lots of different ways. You might like one way better than another. The different ways that you can join a health education program are:

Booklets and tapes	Ask the plan to send you booklets, workbooks, videos and tapes that you can take home with you to learn.
Classes	Join a class where a health expert will show you how to manage your illness and stay healthy.
One-on-one learning	Talk to a health expert in-person or by telephone to ask questions and solve problems as you learn how to manage your illness and stay healthy.
Support groups	Join a group of people who are like you. People in the group learn from each other and help each other.

The plans want to offer these programs in ways that will work best to help you learn. To find out the details about how these programs work and how you can sign up, call your health plan. Look at the last page of this guide for phone numbers.

This is what the symbols mean:

higher = Scored **higher than the average** for Medi-Cal plans in California.

lower = Scored **lower than the average** for Medi-Cal plans in California.

average = Scored **about the same as the average** for Medi-Cal plans in California.

no results = Too few Medi-Cal plan members to report OR results were not available.

How Medi-Cal plans compare on quality of care for children

This information comes from two sources. The State of California did a survey* to ask people in Medi-Cal about the quality of care and service they were getting from their health plan. Medi-Cal also collected information from each plan to see how many people in the plan got the care and services they needed when they needed them.

	Contra Costa Health Plan	Blue Cross of CA Partnrshp
Getting needed care Children got the care they needed without problems.	average	average
Getting care quickly Children got appointments and treatment without long waits.	average	average
How well doctors communicate Doctors listened carefully, gave good explanations, and showed respect.	average	average
Courteous office staff Office or clinic staff were helpful and treated parents and children with courtesy and respect.	higher	average
Plan customer service Parents got the help they needed from plan customer service and plan written material.	average	average
Vaccines (shots) for children Children got all of the vaccines (shots) they were supposed to have to prevent illness.	average	lower
Check-ups for teenagers Teenagers got all of the check-ups they were supposed to have.	average	lower
Care for children with asthma Children with asthma got the right kinds of medicines.	lower	higher

*Data reported in 2004 & 2005.

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no results = Too few Medi-Cal plan members to report OR results were not available.

How Medi-Cal plans compare on quality of care for adults

This information comes from two sources. The State of California did a survey* to ask people in Medi-Cal about the quality of care and service they were getting from their health plan. Medi-Cal also collected information from each plan to see how many people in the plan got the care and services they needed when they needed them.

	Contra Costa Health Plan	Blue Cross of CA Partnrshp
Getting needed care People got the care they needed without problems.	average	average
Getting care quickly People got appointments and treatment without long waits.	average	average
How well doctors communicate Doctors listened carefully, gave good explanations, and showed respect.	average	average
Courteous office staff Office or clinic staff were helpful and treated patients with courtesy and respect.	average	average
Plan customer service People got the help they needed from plan customer service and plan written materials.	average	average
Pregnancy care Pregnant women got regular check ups before their baby was born.	average	average
Care after childbirth New mothers got regular check ups after their baby was born.	average	average
Care for adults with asthma Adults with asthma got the right kinds of medicines.	higher	no results

*Data reported in 2004 & 2005.

For more information about Medi-Cal health plans call **1-800-430-4263**

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Where to get answers if you have questions

Questions about Medi-Cal

If you have questions about Medi-Cal benefits, choosing a plan, or enrolling in Medi-Cal,

Look in your enrollment booklet, called *My Medi-Cal Choice for Healthy Care*.

Call 1-800-430-4263 to talk to someone at Health Care Options. It's a free call.

The TTY/TDD number is 1-800-430-7077. This phone number is for people who have difficulties with hearing or speech. You need special equipment to use it.

Medi-Cal holds meetings all over the state to help people understand the Medi-Cal program and how to sign up. You can come to one of these meetings if you want to hear about your choices and ask questions in person. To find out where and when meetings are held, look in the booklet *My Medi-Cal Choice for Healthy Care* or call Health Care Options at 1-800-430-4263.

How to file a grievance

If you have trouble getting an interpreter when you need one, or getting important written materials translated, you have the right to file a grievance. To file a grievance you may call your health plan or send them a letter.

At the same time that you file a grievance with your health plan, you can ask for a State Hearing. Call 1-800-952-5253 (TTY/TDD: 1-800-952-8349) to ask for a State Hearing or send a letter to:

California Department of Social Services
State Hearing Division
P.O. Box 944243, MS 19-37
Sacramento, CA 94244-2430

Questions about the health plans

If you have questions about how to use the plans and the programs or services they offer, you can call these phone numbers:

Contra Costa Health Plan
1-877-661-6230
TTY/TDD: 1-800-735-2929

Blue Cross of CA Partnrshp
1-800-407-4627
TTY/TDD: 1-888-757-6034

Para recibir una copia de esta guía en español, llame al 1-800-430-3003. ¡Llamada gratis! Esta guía se llama *Una Guía para Ayudarle a Escoger el Mejor Plan de Salud de Medi-Cal para Usted y su Familia*. Tiene información importante sobre la calidad de la atención médica de los planes de salud de Medi-Cal que puede escoger.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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